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ABSTRACT

Despite consensus on the administrative reforms needed in school effectiveness programs, policy problems are raised when administrators and school boards want to translate research findings on school improvement into practical terms. Although school systems are now using a number of organizational tools that lift standardized test scores (for instance, broad instructional goals are being clarified and classroom teaching matched to goals), schools are not finding effectiveness programs cost-free as implementation expenses and continuing programs impose substantial costs. Issues of hiring, training, evaluating, and increasing staff awareness capture the personnel policy tasks. Districts must choose administrative fiat or school-generated initiatives to implement new strategies. Boards must, in any case, consider the issues of requiring compliance with policy, the shape of inservice training, and the incentives and sanctions available to administrators. Although research stresses the role of administrators as instructional leaders, their leadership roles must be clarified for each district's situation. Boards and administrators must also be aware that pushes for effectiveness may have unanticipated consequences: in increased curriculum uniformity, narrowing of school focus, and staff conflicts. (JW)

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TRANSFORMING THE FROG INTO THE PRINCE:

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PRACTICE AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

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TRANSFORMING THE FROG INTO THE PRINCE: EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PRACTICE AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

The new California Superintendent of Public Instruction, who campaigned on a platform celebrating a Norman Rockwell view of schooling, appointed as his deputy a savvy school superintendent who had developed one of the few systematic efforts in the state to implement the findings drawn from school effectivess research. Alaska Governor Jay Hammond appointed a Task Force on Effective Schools that produced a report in 1981 recommending practices drawn from the same body of research for all of the state's schools. Eight other states, according to a recent report from the Education Commission of States, have established specific projects anchored in this literature. New York City, Seattle, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Atlanta, and a score of other cities across the country have installed programs to improve the academic performance of students. Consumer Reports, Parents magazine, and other popular journals run pieces entitled "How Effective Are Your Schools?" or "What Makes a Good School?" Television programs portray "miracle worker" Marva Collins in her private preparatory school in Chicago as an exemplar of a first-rate teacher who established an effective school. Finally, the vocabulary of school effectivess research has entered the daily language of school administrators--the surest test of popularity: high expectations, instructional leadership, an orderly environment, a positive climate, consensus over academic goals are phrases that echo a trendy jargon. 1

The initial impulse behind the study of effective schools is to improve student academic performance in low-income, largely minority schools. Reacting sharply to the Coleman Report (1966) and its progeny that suggested student achievement could be affected little by what teachers and administrators could

do, a number of researchers published findings in the mid- and late-1970s that merged. One line of research drew from work on teaching practices linked to improved test scores--the coin of the realm a la Coleman; another line of research drew from investigations of schools that revealed unexpectedly high test score gains, given the schools' ethnic and socio-economic mix of students. Both bodies of research produced findings identifying teacher behaviors and school practices that intersected neatly, if not easily, with practitioner wisdom on what schools should do to become academically productive, again, as measured by standardized test scores in math and reading. 2

Practitioners seldom wait for researchers to signal that school improvement can move forward. Nor have the substantial methodological problems inherent to the research findings on effective schools halted policymakers from taking these findings and converting them into programs. With a quick look over their shoulders at an underconfident public, many school boards and superintendents, believing that what they do counts and that tightly coupled organizations can make an academic difference in children's lives, have moved forward with dispatch in embracing a growing body of research on effective schools. I do not suggest that policies anchored more in faith than statistical significance are misguided. On the contrary, I suggest that policies are forged in a crucible that mixes political realities, practitioner wisdom, technical expertise and whatever can be extracted from research. Policymakers face practical dilemmas in which research findings often prove inadequate or irrelevant. There is, I believe, an irreconcilable tension between empirical research that seldom reveals clear causal links to policy and daily decisionmaking by practitioners who are driven by circumstances to act and anxious to locate their decisions in a technical rationality often found wanting.

When I served as superintendent I initiated, with the School Board's blessing, a six-school improvement project. These schools contained predominately minority children, many of whom came from low-income families, who scored in the bottom quartile of Arlington elementary schools. The School Board and I wanted improvement and yet we lacked designs drawn from research or a tested formula that had worked elsewhere. Leading advocates of effective schools came and spoke to teachers and administrators. Resources, modest to be sure, were set aside to pur chase staff time and materials for the six schools. Enthusiasm ran high. Since I left in 1981 the project continues to have the support of my successor. Standardized test scores in the six schools have risen. The Board has now identified the improvement of elementary schools as a top priority for 1983-1984 and has expanded the mission of the district team of specialists to encompass all elementary schools in the county.

Based upon my work, the experience of those school boards and superintendents that have taken research findings and converted them into mandates, and what I have learned from studying effective schools as part of the course I teach, I want to concentrate on those policy issues with which local boards and superintendents must wrestle in transforming what researchers have found into different administrative and teacher behavior. Unlike fairy tales, school reform requires more than a kiss to convert a frog into a stunning prince.

In raising these policy issues at the local level I want to be clear that as a practitioner-academic for over a quarter-century I share the commitment of colleagues across the nation to improve schooling. While these words may ring defensively, I write them to separate myself from the predictable academic challenge to any body of research findings being implemented prematurely or selectively. The familiar pattern for a new school improvement idea in which a

burst of romance is followed by frustration and disappointment appears to describe the trajectory of the effective schools' enthusiasm (I was about to write the word "movement"). While articles have begun to appear that criticize severely the research methods, findings, and efforts to implement effective schools--thereby confirming the familiar pattern--there is much to be learned from an analysis of what has and has not be done, what is and is not known about local district initiatives in building effective schools. Experience outstrips research on districts implementing improvement policies; such knowledge may offer clues to local policymakers. Hence, while I may criticize what has occurred in various districts it will be from the vantage point of a practitioner-academic committed to school improvement, learning from the experiences of others, and suggesting where researchers may wish to pursue promising leads. Finally, I will argue that productive schooling demands more than higher test scores.

Let me briefly summarize the problems with the research and practice of effective schools that have already become evident by 1983. 3

No one knows how to grow effective schools. None of the richly-detailed, lovingly written descriptions of high-performers can point to a blueprint of what a teacher, principal, or superintendent can do to improve academic achievement. Constucting a positive, enduring school climate remains beyond the planner's pen. Telling principals what to say and do in order to boost teacher expectations of students or renovate a marginal faculty into one with esprit remains beyond the current level of superintendent or professor expertise. No one knows reliable or exact answers to these questions. Road signs exist but no maps are yet for sale.

The language is fuzzy. A half-dozen different definitions of "effectiveness" surface from the studies that are methodological clones of one

another. The concept of climate varies with the researcher and practitioner using it. Some feel that the term "leadership" is undefinable. "Instructional leadership", for some, resides in the role of principal; for others, in the teaching staff; and for others it is beyond definition.

Effectiveness as a concept is constricted. Tied narrowly to test scores in low-order math and reading skills, school effectiveness research and programs ignore many skills, habits, and attitudes beyond the reach of paper-and-pencil tests. Educators and parents prize other outcomes of schooling that transcend current definitions of effectiveness: sharing, learning to make decisions, developing self-esteem, higher-order thinking skills, a sense of the aesthetic, etc.

Research methodologies leave much to be desired. Most of the studies that use multiple variables and regression models of analysis have failed to control for school populations and previous history of achievement. Similarly, because most of the studies sample a district at one point in time, determining which variables cause which outcomes becomes a thorny, if not impossible, obstacle. Do faculty high expectations produce higher student achievement or are the higher staff expectations a result of improved student test scores? Deciding upon which direction causality flows is almost impossible in the research designs commonly used in effective schools research. Furthermore, because many studies are done on maverick schools--"outliers"--generalizing to the larger population of mainstream sites is, at best, risky.

Most research has been done in elementary schools. Apart from a few studies, this research has generally occurred in the lower elementary grades and the findings have little application to the secondary school. Junior and senior high schools are organizationally and culturally quite different from the lower

grades. To generalize findings from these grades in low-level (but important) skills to the upper grades is like peddling hair-growing lotions to bald men.

Little attention is directed at the role of district leadership. The concentration upon the local school site and principal leadership that dominates the research implicitly ignores the pivotal role that school boards and superintendents play in mobilizing limited resources, giving legitimacy to a reform effort, and the crucial interplay between central office and school site that can spell the difference between implementation success and failure. Few researchers stress that schools are nested in larger organizations which constrain while permitting choice at the local site. Thus, the larger picture that district administrators carry in their heads is often missing from the analyses of effective schools researchers. Yet with all of these shortcomings to the literature on high-performing schools, school boards have mandated and superintendents have implemented effective school programs showing little concern for the danger of converting correlations into policies

Coincident with the rising interest in these research findings has been the trend, albeit a slow one, of improving test scores among elementary students who previously had registered declines in results on standardized achievement tests. Test scores in elementary schools have, indeed, improved in the last few years. The National Assessment of Educational Progress reports that reading and math scores have risen. Big city districts publish tests scores that register gains in skills. I suggest no causal linkage. I believe what has occurred is a steep rise in the learning curve of boards of education and school chiefs. Administrators have discovered that after forging tighter organizational linkages between what teachers teach and the content of test items results in reading and math rise without violating ethics or spending substantial amounts of money.

Let me now divide the discussion into three parts. I distinguish between those policies that have as their intent improving district-wide performance on standardized tests and implementation strategies used by the superintendent to transform board decisions into school practice. I assume that how policy decisions are implemented reshape the original policy and influence the intended outcomes. Moreover, no science of implementation can forsee all consequences so I devote a section to the unanticipated results of converting these research findings into district policies and school practices. Thus, I distinguish between district policies to improve overall productivity (as measured by test scores), implementation strategies, and unanticipated consequences. Let me remind the reader this is an exploratory analysis since few effective schools studies have focused on district-level policies or given explicit attention to implementation strategies; the thrust of the research has been on the school site and classroom. Hence, citations will be few.

DISTRICT POLICIES

Districts that have embraced the mission to improve schools along the lines suggested in the literature of effective schools, that is, goal-setting, targeting academic aims, high expectations, frequent monitoring,etc., have assembled a roughly-hewn set of policies drawn from state mandates, other districts, and previous experience that is conceptually simple and targeted like a rifle shot on lifting test scores. These policies hasten a tighter coupling between organizational goals and the formal structure while relying on a traditional top-down pattern of implementation. Sometimes at the behest of a school board but more often at the instigation of a superintendent, these policy decisions trigger a set of actions that produce a similar pattern in districts pursuing higher test results..4

This pattern includes the adoption of the following policies:

1. School board and superintendent establish district-wide instructional goals often stated in terms of student outcomes, i.e. test score improvement.
2. School board revises student promotion policies in line with stated outcomes for certain grade levels; board pours steel into graduation requirments by toughening course content, amount of seat-time students spend in classes, and adding extra subjects.
3. Superintendent mandates planning process for each school. Each staff produces school-wide and individual classroom goals targeted upon student outcomes, that is, aligned with the district goals.
4. The district curriculum (kindergarten through the twelfth grade) is reviewed to determine if the objectives for subject matter and skills, the textbooks and other instructional materials, and both district and national tests are consistent with what teachers teach in classrooms.
5. Superintendent revises district supervisory practices and evaluation instruments used with teachers and principals to align them with district goals and the literature on effective teachers and principals.
6. Board and superintendent create a district-wide assessment program. This process produces information on what progress, if any, occurs in reaching system, school, and classroom goals. Information is used to make program changes.
7. Superintendent introduces a staff development program for teachers, priucipals, central office supervisors, and the school board concentrating on effective schools and teaching,

goal-making, assessment procedures, evaluation of staff, and the steps necessary to implement each of the above.

Few districts have installed all of the these policies at once or in a sequence resembling the one above. Often on a pragmatic, ad hoc basis superintendents have begun with, for example, goal-setting and test analysis. They then become aware of the crucial match between curriculum objectives, promotion policies, district goals, and test items. Or in the overhaul of staff evaluation, a school board member or central office administrator will ask if the new instruments and procedures should be keyed in to district goals for student performance, thus, forging another linkage. While serendipity plays a part, the drift toward organizational tautness is unmistakable.

From images popular in the academic journals of schools as loosely-linked, amorphous enterprises with plenty of slack, a counter-image now emerges from such districts of an organization tightly-coupled in both goals and formal structure targeted sharply on academic productivity. District officials pursuing policies that fasten individual schools snugly to the central office believe they have found just the right hammer to pound in a nail.

There is a growing acceptance among practitioners that these policies work. Like a popular television show that begets clones in order to achieve a larger share of the audience, school boards and their executives seek out what works elsewhere and xerox what they find for their districts. Findings drawn from the effective schools research spread through informal superintendent networks, national conferences of school board associations and administrators, journals frequently read by school officials, and information on what pacesetter districts do. What needs to be underscored, however, is that practitioner beliefs in such policies yielding higher scores on standardized tests exceeds what researchers report. No studies have yet shown which policies, independently

or in combination, produce the desired effects. No research has yet demonstrated which strategies in executing policy decisions yield desired results. In short, while there are believers who have seen improved student performance on tests after the introduction of such policies, establishing that the policies have caused the improvement has yet to occur. Even more important, success in lifting scores exacts a price from the organization that few policymakers have yet calculated. I will return to these issue of unanticipated consequences of tighter-coupling.

To summarize: school systems have learned through their experience and that of other districts to use a number of organizational tools that policymakers believe will lift district test scores. And standardized test results have begun to improve in reading and math in the elementary grades although it is still unclear as to what caused the improvement. Yet in this brief summary of district policies aimed at improving system-wide effectiveness, I have failed to mention the bread-and-butter items, the staples of district policymaking: money and personnel.

Money. One of the silent messages, yet quite loud to observant policymakers, stemming from the effective schools literature is the apparent cost-free nature of the reform. The implicit message is that if the school board and superintendent can change teacher and principal hearts (i.e secure commitment to improved schooling) and minds (i.e. increase expectations for students, learn effective managerial and teaching strategies) schools will produce higher test results. In the midst of shrinking enrollments and fiscal retrenchment the hope of turning ineffective schools around for pennies is most attractive. Born in the backwash of the 1966 Coleman Report and coming of age during a retrenchment unseen by educators since the 1930s, the effective schools research implicitly asserts that money does not make a difference. People do.

Spending more is less important than strategically redirecting existing funds to enhance staff capacities in performing more effectively. 5

At the district level, then, the hidden message is that substantial infusions of new money to implement system-wide policies on effective schools are unnecessary. Only in a severely restricted sense is this message accurate. Yes, there are substantial indirect costs involved in initiating an school effectiveness effort and there are modest direct costs. But far more important, I believe, is the larger issue of total district resources available to fund the entire program of schooling. Teacher salaries, for example, recruitment of new teachers, retention of gifted senior faculty, and adding instructional leaders to an administrative cadre are also linked to district improvement. I state this bluntly to prevent any misunderstanding or to suggest that purchasing a school effectiveness program is buying district-wide improvement for pennies. In making the following statements I draw from no district-level studies on effective schools. Few researchers interested in effective schools have investigated district policies; most have concentrated upon the individual school site. So I draw from my experience as superintendent and that of colleagues that I have come to know who have shared similar approaches, and scattered first-person accounts of district actions.

The primary costs to initiate and implement system-wide policies to increase productivity are located in staff retraining, hiring consultants, and reassigning central office supervisors and administrators. In new York City's School Improvement Program, over one million dollars a year in state and foundation grants since 1979 have purchased additional staff, teacher, parent, and evaluator time to cover costs of introducing site-based programs in almost twenty schools. In most instances, however, far smaller sums have bought consultant and teacher time, materials, and supplies. Most costs, I have found,

are indirect, i.e. hidden with no extra dollars added to budget. In Arlington, Virginia, for example, to initiate a six-school project on effective schools (out of twenty-one elementary schools) $20,000 was added to the budget. The annual operating budget for the entire school system of thirty plus schools and over 2000 employees was in excess of $53 million(1980).

Far more money, however, was spent in staff time to design, monitor, and assess annual school plans with their goals and objectives; analyse test items in all standardized and locally-developed instruments; review current curriculum goals and their match with district tests and goals; and revise existing evaluation tools for teachers and administrators to bring them in line with district goals. I would estimate for a school system the size of Arlington (20,000 student enrollment in 1974; 15,000 in 1981) that between $75,000 and $100,000 annually was spent in staff time in the initial years of getting policies in place, training staff, monitoring results, and returning information to principals, teachers, and the community. Since I had no specific staff assigned to do this work, I absorbed a portion of the workload. Also I directed central office administrators to do tasks beyond their assigned responsibilities until School Board-approved reorganizations realigned individuals with the thrust of new policies on goal-setting, annual school plans, curriculum revision,etc. In Atlanta, Alonzo Crim described a very similar process of reorganizing and reassigning existing staff in order to concentrate upon student outcomes. Similarly, Donald Steele, Seattle's new superintendent, strapped for funds yet embracing the effective schools approach, has assigned central office adminstrators outside of instruction to advise individual elementary schools in addition to their regular duties. 6

Note, however, that these rough cost estimates are for policies implemented in a top-down manner; estimates would differ for those implementation efforts

that begin with the school site and proceed from the bottom-up or combinations of the two approaches. A careful analysis of direct and indirect costs associated with adopting and implementing district policies designed to improve school effectiveness has yet to be done. I suspect when such a study is done the results will reveal substantial costs in redirected staff time, modest amounts of new money invested, and foregone costs in neglecting other aspects of the district's program. 7

Personnel. Hiring, training, evaluating, and increasing staff awareness of effective schools capture the primary personnel tasks. In Arlington, a lowered budget ceiling made hiring new staff impermissible. Exceptions were for those instances when the Board approved federal and state grants my aides had successfully applied for to create specific jobs such as monitoring and assessing district goals and school annual plans. I presume that few districts in the late 1970s were able to hire new staff then or can now except with the help of private or public funding external to the school system.

In the literature on effective schools, establishing a staff consensus over an instructional agenda ranks high as a priority. In each school the principal and teachers shape that agenda and consensus; a principal needs to judge which teachers will work best within that school's culture. In the best of all possible worlds, the principal--the superintendent's designee who runs the school--should be free to choose the staff that he or she will need to make a school effective.

The world that principals currently inhabit, however, offers severely restricted choices in assembling staff. Reassignment of teachers as a result of shrinking enrollment, the closing of schools, or similar events usually favor senior over junior teachers. Teachers coming to a school involuntarily for the first time to replace, for example, one or two enthusiastic but less senior

teachers being bumped to make space for them may weaken the faculty's commitment to certain goals. Staff esprit and the continuity that is so important to constructing an effective school may suffer. Thus, teacher assignment policies often embedded in contracts, if not tradition, may work against district efforts to implement effective schools particularly when the system is retrenching. While reduction-in-force policies vary across districts I have observed that principals and personnel chiefs have developed informal ways of abiding by the letter of the policy while beating the policy's intent by securing those teachers who might be better matched for one school over another. Some principals, to cite one tactic, needing teachers scan the recall list of teachers who had been pink-slipped because of shrinking enrollment and well aware of which ones are viewed as weak, will keep in daily touch with the Director of Personnel in the weeks before school opens to determine exactly when they will create a new class of students--the trigger for securing a teacher immediately. Invariably, the astute principal will create the class when a weak teacher has been assigned elsewhere and the next teacher on the recall list is more in keeping with what the principal seeks. Nonetheless, these informal manuevers are limited efforts to strike a practical compromise between conflicting policy aims in a district.

Selection and reassignment of principals offers less policy conflict but can generate opposition anyway. Central to fashioning an improved school, according to the growing literature, is the principal. Most districts allow the superintendent to choose principals for various schools. Career rotation, early retirement, and similar policies generate some turnover in school positions. But a dilemma arises anyhow. For those schools with large percentages of low-income children where test scores are unacceptably low and no improvement has occurred for five or more years under the same principal who has no inclination to

move--what can the superintendent do? Transferring the principal shifts the problem to another school staff and parent community. Due process and evaluation procedures usually prevent arbitrary movement of a principal because of low student performance. I say "arbitrary" because few districts have included in their selection criteria or evaluation policies the clear expectation that principals will improve student academic performance. To move a principal on the grounds that he or she has failed to improve the school's academic performance might be viewed as capricious unless such an standard was embedded in existing policies and remedial help was offered.

In Arlington where administrators are unionized, the School Board approved the overhaul of the administrative evaluation policy. The new policy called for joint setting of goals and objectives between the superintendent and principal, a clear linkage between district goals and the principal's school goals, and the development by the administrator of a professional improvement plan. Leadership, instructional improvement, and managerial skills were explicitly stressed in the process. I and my designees met with principals individually two to three times a year to discuss both their professional and school plans and to revise their goals, if necessary. Workshops were held on instructional supervision, managing teacher evaluation, assessing school improvement, and analyzing test scores. When I brought before the School Board an instance of a principal that I had evaluated twice as unsatisfactory in instructional leadership and managing the school program, I used as the major portion of the evidence repeated efforts to improve the principal's instructional management and the persistent erosion of student academic performance over a five year period. The School Board approved the transfer of the principal to a non-school post.

Buried in the language of principals as instructional leaders and effective teachers, then, is a crisp accountability for student performance--a steel fist

encased in velvet. Boards and superintendents are driven by the inexorable logic of the research findings on effective schools to wrestle with the issue of marginal and incompetent staff beyond passing them from school to school or, as one superintndent put it, "engaging in the dance of the lemons." Because so little has been written or discussed openly about teacher and principal incompetence insofar as their technical inability to improve students' academic performance, each district often travels alone in figuring out what to do with staff who cannot handle the higher expectations for their roles. 8

Researchers interested in effective schools have yet to pursue the cross-cutting policy conflicts that occur in selecting, assigning, and evaluating both teachers and administrators when embarking upon a district-wide improvement program, especially at a time of low confidence in the schools and a climate hostile to budget increases.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Current practitioner wisdom harnessed to effective schools' research cultivates the image of a trim bureaucratic organization that can get the job done, i.e. improve test scores. District policies on goals, school plans, revised curricula, analyses of tests, new evaluative procedures, and frequent monitoring of system-wide progress, according to the growing consensus among boards and school chiefs, will produce outcomes satisfying both professionals and community expectations. But little notice has been given to how this will occur. Announcing a decision with a bang of the gavel is not the end of a process but, if anything, merely the beginning of a sequence of events (often unanticipated) that will frequently determine the eventual results of the decision and the fidelity of those results to intentions.9

A tighter coupling between the central office and individual schools along particular lines, i.e. goals, monitoring, evaluation, outcomes,etc., often gets translated into the familiar pattern of top-down implementation. By that, I mean a strategy founded upon the belief that a chain of command stretching tautly from the board of education through the superintendent directs principals to lead teachers who, in turn, will raise student academic performance. By using formal organizational tools such as technical assistance, rewards, and sanctions both compliance and productivity increase, according to proponents of this strategy. Central office administrators, viewing themselves as having the larger (and more accurate) picture of district needs, often see top-down implementation as efficient and swift. Their thrust is to set targets, establish control, and reduce discretion. Increasing uniformity in practices will, as the beliefs hold, produce improved results. Two key assumptions guide this line of thinking: first, there is a body of knowledge and expertise that can be used to produce high test scores in basic skills; second, superintendent leadership and managerial savvy can weld a consensus in a mission and drive the organization toward its achievement. From Portland, Maine to Atlanta, Georgia, from Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Milpitas, California school districts have used this familiar pattern of implementation. Again, I do not mean that these assumptions are misguided, inaccurate, or just plain wrong. They reflect, I feel, the bind that superintendents, principals, and teachers find themselves in when they are compelled to act in the face of acute external pressures yet possess an incomplete technology to achieve outcomes.

School boards and superintendents commonly use these approaches to translate policies into practice for a number of reasons. Pressure for results pinch the school board and superintendent far more than the teacher or principal. There is far more turnover among board members and superintendents due to dissatisfaction

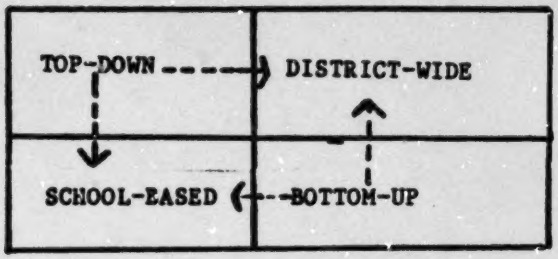
with performance than principals or teachers. Moreover, the implicit indictment buried in the literature on effective schools is that if teachers and principals would only alter their beliefs and practices, student performance would improve. To expect, then, that teachers and principals who are street-level bureaucrats at the bottom of every district organizational chart to agree that they are both the problem and solution--is asking both to become scapegoats for a district's failure to improve academic performance. Few scapegoats have been noted for volunteering. Finally, administrators who made the decisions, more often than not, believe that the strategy works. Because time is often short, cries for results are loud, pressures pinch acutely, and routines for top-down implementation are already in place this approach is widespread. In short, top-down implementation is administratively convenient.

Note, however, that nowhere have I mentioned policymakers' theories of change or notions of how organizations can be modified that are rooted in empirical data. For the most part, top-down implementation as practiced by those districts with policies aimed at improving schools contains some theory of organizational change (i.e. rational or scientific management) but the level of discourse on strategies and tactics of securing improvement among district policymakers seldom include discussion of how these conceptions of change are wedded to strategies or outcomes.Nor do most internal discussions of top-down implementation project the possible consequences of this strategy. I will take up this point later.

There are, of course, other implementation strategies. A bottom-up approach would concentrate on each school determining its agenda, monitoring and evaluating itself, and using district funds in the manner that staff and parents choose. In short, each school would decide for itself how best to reach district goals. Rooted in the literature on organizational development the bottom-up

strategy concentrates on welding among the staff a vision of what the school might be, creating a team spirit, cultivating mutual trust, and building emotional bonds through collaborative decision-making on school issues. Many practitioners and researchers convinced of the importance of staff commitment, local ownership of decisions, and joint efforts at the school site have cited instances in the effective schools research where such implementation strategies have produced desired outcomes in test performance. Organizationally, such strategies sustain existing loose linkages between the central office and school; encourage more, not less, principal discretion; produce redundancy and, for efficiency engineers at the top of the organization, untidy arrangements. Superintendents who find this slack congenial lean heavily on informal communication, use networks within the district, and adroitly handle organizational rituals and traditions. Although infrequent in occurrence, bottom-up approaches appear in the literature on effective schools. 10

So far I have implied that a top-down strategy of implementation means directions drafted in the central office will be executed in each school across the district. Similarly, a bottom-up approach, I suggested implicitly, means school-generated decisions unique to each setting that will vary from school to school in the district. While I may have suggested, then, that the two strategies of top-down and bottom-up are harnessed either to district or school-based applications respectively, I want to stress that mixes of these approaches may and and do occur. Consider the following diagram.



A superintendent, for example, can direct a group of principals in each of their schools to set goals, plan and establish programs, and assess outcomes. By directing from the top a process to occur at each school without prescribing the content of the decisions, a variation on the familiar bottom-up approach emerges. In short, seeking tighter coupling of district practices to school action does not necessarily mean mandating the same effort district-wide; it can be triggered by superintendent mandate but could proceed in a gradual manner on a school-by-school basis.

Whichever strategy is proposed there are critical issues that will need to be addressed by policymakers about voluntarism, inservice training for teachers and principals, incentives, sanctions, and related points. In identifying a few issues, no clear direction on which implementation strategies are most effective is apparent. Few researchers have investigated the connections between strategies and outcomes. Most have recognized the entangled complexity of such diverse elements as the context, roles, individuals, organizational factors (size, history, culture,etc.), the quality of leadership at both district and school-site, timing, and other critical determinants of successful implementation. Beyond recognizing the complexity, few researchers have yet figured out what caused what beyond constructing inventories and taxonomies of essential points--both important activities--but still precursors not surrogates for explanations. Let me now briefly consider three issues to illustrate the larger complexity involved in implementing policies aimed at making schools effective.11

Choice or Mandate. If volunteers will bring high energy and a positive outlook to producing an effective school while draftees will find fault and complain, as many researchers and practitioners believe, what do superintendents do with schools mired at the bottom in performance for years where principals and faculties express great reluctance to join in an improvement program? Mandates, as many school officials know, can produce compliance with the letter of the order. But compliance, as these same officials know from experience, is substantively different from improvement. Even when the superintendent advises the principal to volunteer, a heavy-handed compromise between choice and coercion, some level of compliance is about all that one can reasonably expect.

What school districts have done offers little guidance. In New York City, the Chancellor invited Ronald Edmonds to introduce a school improvement program based upon his research. Voluntarism marked this effort. Schools were invited to participate and Edmonds and his staff chose which schools would participate; In Milwaukee, the superintendent designated eighteen schools with the poorest test scores as the effective schools project; In New Haven, Milpitas, and Seattle, all schools participate in the new program. In Arlington, six schools were initially chosen and the remaining elementary schools may choose to enter the program and receive the services. Of course, there are mixes of choice and coercion that superintendents employ; generally, however, tight-coupling strategies favor mandating involvement; bottom-up approaches prefer staffs to choose. While superintendents' beliefs are strong on which approach works no body of evidence yet supports one tactic or the other.

Local context and superintendent beliefs about change rather than evidence may often determine whether requiring schools to participate or offering choice is the tactic to use. In Arlington, six schools were at the bottom in academic performance; the six were a natural grouping based upon test scores. For two of

the six, for example, to opt out of participating would have left the School Board and me vulnerable to legitimate parent complaints that principals and teachers were insensitive to deteriorating student achievement and resistant to improving the situation. The trade-off in requiring all six staffs to join the program was apparent in varying levels of enthusiasm for the initial effort and, in some cases, foot-dragging reluctance. In other districts where there is a history of voluntary piloting of new approaches, tradition dominates. Thus, the issue of choice or mandate may pivot less on evidence than on local contextual conditions and policymakers' beliefs about which implementation approaches work. This issue of choice needs explicit attention if for no other reason than to assess the anticipated trade-offs that will accrue to either tactic or some imaginative mix of choice and mandate. 12

Inservice Training. The primary tool of delivering help to schools in mobilizing for an improvement program is technical assistance. The implicit theory of change embedded in inservice programs is that faculties and administrators, as individuals and small groups, need additional knowledge and skills in order to implement research findings. Change individuals and the school will become effective is the hidden assumption in technical assistance. The school structure's impact upon individual behavior is often missing from any discussion or analysis of inservice. Organizational regularities involving teachers and students, principals and teachers, school staff and district office, parents and school--not to mention--how the school is organized for instruction and its use of time, none of this enters the usual technical assistance package offered as part of school improvement. The situational context remains in the shadows of most planning for change in school practices.

Some researchers have suggested directions for altering a few organizational norms that shape teacher behavior. By breaking down teacher isolation, for

example, and cultivating a norm of collegiality, Judith Little has shown how teaching practices improve. New work norms of teachers observing one another, talking frequently about pedagogy, and joint planning stimulate the sharing of values that nourish school improvement.

What is offered to teachers is all too familiar. Most teachers and principals know the concepts in the research on effective teaching and schools insofar as classroom instruction and school-wide leadership is concerned although the language and emphasis may be unfamiliar. For teachers listening to lectures and reading articles there is little that is complex in the research or that calls for major shifts in classroom practice although evidence that teachers practice these concepts may be lacking.

For principals, however, the concentration in the literature on instructional leadership does call for extensive work with them on the components to managing an instructional program, i.e. establishing and communicating the mission for the school, supervision of instruction, constructing a positive climate,etc. I do not imply that principals are unaware of instructional management or that they do not perform the function. I suggest only that principals themselves report that they give such managerial activities less time because the nature of the job forces them to concentrate on non-instructional tasks, e.g. maintaining school stability, coping with the inherent conflicts of the middle manager caught between the central office, school faculty, and parents,etc. In addition to principal self-reports, observational studies confirm that instructional management is secondary to non-instructional tasks in the daily whirl of a principal's life. 13

What is seldom included in any of these training sessions for either teachers or principals, however, is equipping both with the awareness that the sharpened expectation for the principal to exert leadership will end the silent

agreement between administrator and faculty to honor each's separate domain. A principal who shifts into a mode where he or she is in classrooms daily, monitors student achievement monthly, and evaluates teacher performance quarterly is a principal that poses a threat to some teachers. Similarly, few inservice sessions deal with dilemmas touching teachers and principals who are asked to put into practice program designs and ideas about which they have had little say and may even disagree with (e.g. using test results as the major standard to judge success) Awareness of these predictable consequences for teacher-principal relationships arising from any effort to implement effective schools is often missing from workshops.

How is technical assistance delivered? The one-shot workshop in the district office with no follow-up, researchers agree, is, at best, symbolic, at worst, trivial. Numerous studies of inservice training state that encouraging teachers and principals at each school site to leave their fingerprints on the training format and content--even to the point of reinventing the obvious--is linked to improved outcomes in staff performance. While partisans of organizational development note such findings, others have observed that local site staff training permits teachers' practical wisdom to adapt new knowledge and skills to their unique circumstances. Continuous sessions with ample and direct follow-up activities are commonly recommended in these studies. 14

Who does the training? New York's School Improvement Program uses trainers from outside the school. These liasons, as they are called, are veteran teachers or supervisors in the system who are savvy to both the formal and informal structure of the New York City public schools. They work with staffs a few days a week in planning, implementing, and evaluating school improvement plans focused tightly on Edmonds' five factors of effectiveness (e.g. strong administrative leadership, school climate conducive to learning, teacher

expectations for high pupil performance,etc.). In the process, they line up consultants and, wherever possible, provide expertise themselves. Arlington uses a team of central office teachers and supervisors in reading, math, and writing who spend concentrated periods of time at a school on particular tasks (e.g. coordinating the entire reading and writing program across grades), provide materials, and then work with the school staff on a consulting basis for the rest of the school year. Other districts will train a cadre of teachers from participating schools and then each school has an on-site trainer who is a resident member of the staff. Some school systems will hold a series of workshops at a central location over the course of the year with follow-up done by designated supervisors. The common pattern, however, still seems to be a series of uncoordinated workshops for principals and teachers with pounds of reading material circulated and a pat on the back. 15

Technical assistance attempts to increase the capacities of the participants to do a productive job. It is the linchpin to any school improvement. Modest sums of money are needed. For programs aimed at delivering the training during the year at the school site. I estimate that $3000 to $4000 a year per school are sufficient to purchase the consultant time, materials, and substitute teacher time to initiate and get a program solidly started. For programs using liasons split between two or three schools, the cost would be hirer initially except if those liasons are reassigned supervisors or other central office personnel who themselves have received some training.

Incentives and Sanctions In top-down implementation, formal and informal incentives and sanctions are organizational tools available to superintendents to shape what happens and introduce managerial control into an ambiguous set of arrangements. With test scores as the coin of the realm, public recognition of school improvement (certificates of achievement awarded by the board of

education, school-by-school scores published in newspapers) acts as an inducement for principals, teachers, and students. School board recognition of academic achievement for both schools and individuals (e.g. higher test scores, winners of academic olympics,etc.) attracts media and citizen notice; far more important, however, is that the top authority takes the time to acknowledge and honor academic excellence. Principals who behave in a manner consistent with descriptions of instructional leadership and produce higher test results become candidates for promotion. Similarly, teachers who develop reputations for consistently turning out classes with high test scores get characterized as principal-material. Securing parental support becomes easier when a school's performance is anchored in standardized test data that reveals promising achievement. For those individuals who derive pleasure from a heightened sense of professionalism, attending workshops, reading materials unavailable to other staff, and participating in an effective schools program is a reward in itself. For others, improved student performance at either the school or district level encourages a sense of belonging and involvement in a larger worthwhile effort. The last two points are also part of the informal rewards associated with bottom-up implementation. An important incentive is the powerful feeling that can grow in a staff that works together and succeeds insofar as producing improved test scores. The we-feeling, the pride in group achievement which fuels further effort, provides participants with increased self-esteem and enhanced confidence to tackle tough jobs. Wise superintendents aware of the influence of their positions and sensitive to the power packed into both formal and informal rewards also know that thier presence and participation in teacher and principal work sessions tells staff and parents what ranks as important in the district.

Thus, school officials have available to them an array of tools to secure commitment.

Sanctions exist also. Test scores cut both ways. When scores plunge without recovering, the implied, if not actual, consequence for teachers and principals may well be criticism that escalates into warnings or even threats of removal. The effective schools' research drives inexorably to the conclusion that children can achieve. When test scores fail to rise or continue to decline, teachers and principals get blamed. While severe penalties such as removal seldom occur, the unspoken threat remains. Union contracts and due process requirements protect instructional staff from swift termination on the basis of test results but long-term patterns of class or school deterioration have been used to institute charges of incompetence.

I raised these issues of choice, inservice, and incentives and sanctions to illustrate just a few thorny questions that result from embracing and executing policies presumably anchored in research findings. After discussing district policies, implementation strategies, and questions not generally taken up in the literature on effective schools, I turn to one element missing in so much that has been written about effective teaching and effective schools: the role of district leadership.

LEADERSHIP

In any reading of the studies on effective schools the pivotal role of the school principal is stressed. The research says that there can be no school labeled effective (again, using the criterion of test scores) without a principal exerting, and here the words vary, a strong administrative presence or an active style, or some variation on the theme of leadership. No study that I have seen lays out empirically-derived principal behaviors that produce the

desirable outcomes. Instead, there are a host of recipe-like prescriptions stemming from personal experience, observed behavior of principals, or inferential leaps based upon some theories or data drawn from other organizations. Thus, the connective tissue, the set of behaviors that principals engage in to develop a school climate that supports academic achievement, gain staff commitment, engender high expectations, supervise individual teachers and the entire instructional program while carrying on the varied and complex duties connected with maintaining order in the school--none of these complex, interacting behaviors have appeared in the literature linked to the production of higher test scores. So far principal leadership remains a correlate of high student achievement. Practitioner faith and folk wisdom sustains the conviction that school-site leadership makes a difference. Research has yet to catch up with this lore to either inform, shape, or contradict practice. 16

Faith and folk wisdom also suggest that the superintendent exerts a critical role in establishing the district agenda, communicating the mission of the district to both the staff and community, creating a system-wide climate favoring achievement, targeting essential personnel and funds, and monitoring and assessing the overall program in order to implement school board policies directed toward school improvement. As with the principal, experience-based knowledge on superintendents as instructional leaders, still to be verified by investigators, exceeds the present state of research-produced knowledge. In reading the accounts superintendents have written or have had written about them and the impressions of observers who have described districts embracing an effective schools approach, I hear echoes of an earlier generation of superintendents who were teacher-scholars deeply interested in the instructional process and active in schools and classrooms. A century ago, superintendents had to teach teachers what to do in classrooms; they inspected what was taught,

listened to children recite, taught classes, and, in general, were unmistakably visible in the school program. That model of superintendent as instructional leader gave way to a managerial approach that has since dominated the superintendency for the last two generations. With the mounting interest in using effective schools research, the older role model of a school chief knowledgable about both curriculum and instruction and visible in the schools beyond the symbolic tour is reasserting itself. 17

The point I wish to make is simple. If the literature on effective schools suggests that no school can become effective, as defined by test score criteria, without the visible and active presence of a principal hip-deep in the elementary school instructional program, then I would suggest that no school board approving the policies described earlier aimed at system-wide improvement can hope for that condition without a superintendent sustaining a higher than usual involvement with the district's instructional program. Of course, there will be districts that have some effective schools regardless of the superintendent's familiarity with instruction. Just as in a school with a principal who is uninvolved with the instructional program and sees his or her task as keeping the ship afloat, there will be first-rate teachers scattered across the school. Nor am I arguing that tasks can not be delegated by the superintendent to subordinates; after all, a principal can't be everywhere at once in a school. And, of course, size is a factor. Can the Chicago superintendent with a half-million students perform as an instructional leader similar to her colleague in Alexandria, Virginia who deals with less than ten thousand children? To sustain the argument, I would answer yes although large districts would require far more symbolic and shrewd instructional leadership targeted upon principals rather than teachers. Personal, active involvement in the district instructional effort seems to be a necessary condition based upon the

small body of accounts describing district efforts and my experience. I state the above as a proposition derived from the logic of existing practice in improving school productivity. No facts yet exist on superintendent behaviors that cause district improvement. I have already mentioned the absence of studies at the district level that investigate the connective tissue that bind central office to the principal and the classroom and superintendent's skills in using managerial tools and symbols important to that district's culture. Which brings me to the ineffable quality of leadership.

At a time when budget cuts, closing schools, program and staff contraction touch most districts, when a crisis of confidence in schools attracts media attention, and when administrators privately (and publicly) bewail the lack of money and the constrictions upon their power--in such times policymakers and academicians call for inspired leadership. If the research on effective schools has yet to produce reliable prescriptions tested in numerous crucibles, the literature on leadership for either the principal or superintendent reveals a similar barrenness. Long on rhetoric and "shoulds" much of what is written leans heavily on perceptions of what formal school leaders do. Only within the last decade has behavioral descriptions of principals and superintendents been produced by a small number of scholars. Yet the tasks that administrators choose to work on, the language they use, the discretion they employ, the symbols they manipulate, the incentives they extend, the style and commitment they project--all dance beyond the grasp of researchers. And there are organizational theorists who argue plausibly that formal leadership is a myth constructed by those who need to attribute influence to incumbents. Hence, what principals and superintendents do daily to create the conditions for instructional improvement and to directly influence students remains in the shadows of research-produced

knowledge. Leadership is a mystery wrapped in a dilemma, encased in a black box closed to researchers yet honored by practitioners and sought by parents. 18

None of the foregoing suggests pessimism for me. I prefer to face uncertainty and know it (i.e. leadership is ineffable) rather than embrace popular recipes that worked once in someone else's kitchen. In concentrating upon what superintendents have done to foster district improvement and in drawing from my experience there are some untested propositions that emerge as worthwhile for researchers and policymakers to explore and determine their validity.

First, no superintendent can secretly improve a school district. The source of formal authority for superintendent initiative is the school board. The board needs to approve the general direction and work in tandem with the superintendent. Self-evident as that reads, the commonplace needs to be stated.

Second, the superintendent sets the agenda and develops the mission; managerial skills are employed to know when to open the gate to ideas and when to close it; when to veto and when to support; in short, the "how" of policymaking.

Third, the superintendent establishes a climate nurturing instructional improvement in the district. Once the superintendent becomes identified with the mission of school improvement, visibility in schools and classrooms--even at the symbolic level--carries weight. Encouragement and support (without conceding anything on expectations) for principals and teachers--protecting the instructional day, nourishing professional development,etc.

Fourth, the school chief uses a number of managerial tools to implement the mission. Targeting limited resources on those activities promising payoff, placing like-minded, skilled staff in key positions that will advance the

district's mission; and actively participating in monitoring and assessing the instructional program.

Such behavior on the part of the superintendent describes a high-profile, active involvement in the instructional side of school operations. Will it produce improved student academic performance? Maybe. Experience-derived knowledge says yes but no body of independent evidence yet exists to demonstrate that engaging in these tasks will yield dividends. What these assertions about superintendent behavior suggest is that some degree of direction and top-down implementation is necessary to launch an improvement program. Once launched, however, the improvement process could travel many routes ranging from organizational development techniques employed with small groups to tightly-managed, orchestrated tasks resembling a chess game. Personal preference and belief systems seem to determine which routes to travel than any body of data.

I need to underscore, however, that the above statements about superintendent behavior are narrowly targeted on academic performance of students. The goals of schooling go well beyond test scores. If the mission of a district embraces many goals, some of which may require substantial changes in teaching practice (e.g. developing student initiative, decisionmaking, and cooperativeness) then leadership tasks may well vary and reach beyond those listed here. Since, in my judgment, a great deal of existing pedagogy and principal behavior is shaped by the structure within which both teachers and administrators work, improved academic achievement is well within the margin of change set by organizational boundaries. Hence, changes directed toward test scores is incremental and very different from a major overhaul of the entire district's instructional program.

Whether or not such leadership activities as described here have indeed produced the higher academic achievement reported in a districts across the nation has yet to be demonstrated. But there are some consequences, mostly unanticipated that have begun to emerge. In turning the organizational ratchet by tightly coupling the central office to the local school and concentrating upon pumping up achievement on tests, a number of trade-offs have surfaced. I believe it is useful to share them for no other reason than informing future policy choices. I saw glimpses of these consequences in the district that I served for seven years and I see them surfacing in other systems as well.

UNANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCES

Uniformity increases. The school effectiveness literature stresses the importance of managing the instructional program and coordinating the curriculum at the school site. What happens in districts concentrating upon improving academic achievement is a strong, irresistible tug toward a standard curriculum, single-adoption of textbooks, and the same workbooks for students. Supplementary materials tailored to student differences is less favored by teachers. Grouping students on the basis of achievement within classrooms requires far more work from the teacher and additional materials. Such efforts become harder to do. The notion of a single, best curriculum and managerial style echoing the pre-1900 years of public schooling reasserts itself. The press toward uniformity is neither good nor bad; every school district strikes some balance between uniformity and diversity in curriculum and program management. The issue is simply that adopting the the school effectiveness research will drive the curriculum and school management toward uniformity.

Ditto for teaching. Within the research on effective teaching practices, particular techniques have been singled out and emphasized. The boosterism

surrounding direct instruction (teaching the whole class at one time, teacher-directed activities, continual monitoring of student work, etc.), for example, presses teachers toward those practices cited in the research as pumping up test results. Most teachers, of course, are comfortable with front-of-the-room instruction. What I see occurring is a certifying of direct instruction as the single best way of teaching. Uncritical cheerleading for this brand of teaching stamps whole-group instruction, lecturing, recitation, and seatwork as effective, going far beyond what the research findings suggest, or even promise. Moreover, repetitive, low-level intellectual skills are now surrounded by a halo of legitimacy. Filling in blanks, getting test-wise to multiple choice items, and completing exercises elevate tedious tasks to the ingredients of effective instruction. Concern for student interest, motivation, and the life of the mind diminishes with accelerated use of dittos, seatwork, and pre- and post-tests. Learning becomes a series of repetitive tasks that need to be completed, placed in folders, and marked by the teacher. In the name of direct instruction and concentration on low-order (but important) basic skills even more drill and routine get justified. While mastery learning, using individual contracts, and small group instruction through teams stand as alternatives to direct instruction in producing academic gains, such approaches remain largely at the margins of the pedagogical radar screen.

The point is simple: the ineffable qualities of teaching as an art--tempo, improvisation, drama, and excitement of performance--few district policymakers acknowledge as important and receive even less attention. The pleasures that teachers derive from their relationships with children, the unpredictable, the unexpected, the unplanned, and the joyful go unnoticed by partisans of effective teaching. There is a danger, I believe, in smothering the craft and rewards of teaching in the rush to make instruction scientific and efficient. Such a

concern for the artistic side of teaching gets short shrift in policymakers' embrace of effective schools research findings. The dream of an earlier generation of reformers for an efficient one-best-system of instruction seemingly has resurfaced with the undisguised fervor for direct instruction.

The educational agenda narrows. In pursuit of improved test scores, less attention is spent on areas viewed as non-academic: music, art, speaking, self-esteem,etc. As a long-time advocate of basic skills for students I do nonetheless get concerned over the tunnel vision that accompanies the quest for higher stanines. A posture seems to develop among insistent partisans of effective schools that if a subject or skill cannot be directly linked to student academic performance (again, as measured by standardized tests), the burden of proof rests on those who see schooling in broader terms than spelling bees and multiplication tables.

Of course, constricting the agenda for public schools was necessary given the ballooning expectations of the last half-century. Balance, however, is essential in setting forth precisely what schools can and cannot do well. Plainly, schools can raise test scores of all children. The evidence is coming in and will continue to mount. But schools can do more than elevate percentile ranks. The search for the appropriate balance in public hopes for schools between raising test scores (which can be done) and reducing unemployment (which is beyond the reach of schools) is a task for both citizens and educators. But a danger still exists in shrinking the school district's agenda to only the least common denominator that can be achieved easily. The means can become the end.

Staff conflict between teachers and administrators increases over shift in principal and superintendent role. With heightened interest in instructional leadership goes a shift in administrator behavior. Weekly presence in classrooms, periodic evaluations, and scrutiny of each class's test achievement

boosts teacher anxiety over potential loss in autonomy as the boss over the classroom. Principal insistence on pushing direct instructional methods hints darkly at the teacher's inability to make professional judgments on pedagogy. Thus, a conflict that commonly lay hidden beneath the surface threatens to erupt into skirmishes between teachers who may feel that their professional domain is being penetrated by administrators who know little of the students they face daily and the craft that they practice hourly.

Similarly, between principals and the central office the latent hostility produced by different perspectives (the view of the district from the principal's office contrasted to the view from the superintendent's desk) sharpens noticeably with the superintendent's escalated interest in school-wide test scores, comparisons with other schools, and the drive to make principals accountable for each school meeting district goals. Revision in evaluation instruments for administrators raise the spectre that each person's job is on the line if they don't produce. Few researchers have pursued this potential conflict as a consequence of adopting policies based upon effective schools' research.19

Schools with high test scores escape obligation to improve. Because the focus of so much recent effort is on lifting test scores, those schools where the median percentile ranks in math and reading exceed ninety-five receive little attention to their curriculum, instruction, or organization. The presumption is that all is well. That is a mistake. In high-scoring schools, analysis of sub-groups of children often reveal that there are students who need remedial help. In other schools with students scoring in the ninety-ninth percentile, teachers may use materials at the current grade-level of the students well below what students could be doing. Teachers may resist moving them ahead to advanced lessons because of the ripple effects upon the next grade's

teachers whose materials are geared to a certain expected level. Also the nature of many of these tests discriminate against those students with the highest scores. Low expectations--"they are so smart, they will get it on their own"--often pervade such schools insulating students from improvement since the school looks terrific insofar as percentile ranks.

Research findings on effective schools are misapplied to high schools. While there is an intuitive and craft wisdom to much of the findings that do apply to high schools (clear academic goals, importance of climate, staff consensus, active leadership, etc.) there are sharp limits on applying these findings to the upper grades. One limit is that the organizational structure of the high school is closer to the college than the elementary school. In terms of size, mission, how time is structured, student-teacher contact, previous training of teachers and their world view of what is important for young men and women--the high school is profoundly different than the elementary school. To say that high schools can become more effective is substantively different than saying what has been learned from studying the lower grades is applicable to the upper ones. But the misuse of research persists. The Charles Kettering Foundation sponsors a program that lists the fourteen attributes of effective high schools. It is a melange of traits drawn from findings on effective elementary schools and theory undergirding organizational development. The U.S. Department of Education has recently recognized high schools across the country as effective which possess these fourteen attributes. Principals are told to become instructional leaders. Supervise instruction, coordinate curriculum, evaluate classroom teachers, they are advised. Test scores will improve. Even though the nature of the curriculum and the standardized test program vary significantly from the elementary grades, assurance is offered in those districts that graft research findings onto the

high school. The graft will fail, in my judgment, until a more sensitive, grounded organizational analysis is made of the high school. The misuse of research findings is very tempting to policymakers who hear the shrill criticism of taxpayer associations, governmental officials, academicians, and professional reformers. Conclusions from research studies that demonstrate high positive correlations are often too seductive for district policymakers pressed to increase productivity to ignore. The slippery twist that converts correlations into action agendas occurs repeatedly in districts. 20

These unanticipated consequences (there are others as well) raise the obvious question: if productivity improves, as I believe it will, and parents and policymakers are pleased with higher test results, are children receiving a better education? For inner-city children across the nation who have received a schooling built upon the false beliefs of their incapacity to learn, they are clearly the beneficiaries of effective school efforts. This is a fundamental first step. It must be taken on moral as well as educational grounds. No excuses are acceptable.

But improved test scores are simply not enough. To believe that a school is effective once it demonstrates test score gains is, in of itself, a sell-out of students and their capacity to learn more than multiple-choice answers to test items. The current question that drives many schools today--what can we do to improve student performance on achievement tests?--is a short-term, useful but constricted one. The framework for an answer to this question for elementary schools comes from research on effective teaching and schools. That framework, I am confident, is useful and will prove successful in lifting test scores. While it is a necessary first step it will prove insufficient in reaching for broader, less easily measured and fundamental goals of schooling. The dangers of confusing <u>means</u> (test score gains) with <u>ends</u> (multiple aims of schooling)

are real. Based upon my experience and awareness of trade-offs inevitable in the implementation of effective school programs, I suggest that the above question targeted on test scores be revised to ask: In improving test results, how can the general, more complex and non-quantifiable goals of schooling be achieved? Such a rephrased question places test results in a ranking position but in relation to such other important outcomes as problem-solving, cooperativeness, independence in decisionmaking, positive feeling for learning, caring for others, an appreciation for the aesthetic, and similar aims.

Schools are complicated inventions. To judge them by a percentile rank is little better than judging a car's quality solely by its miles-per-gallon or a hospital's effectiveness by its vacant-bed rate or a president by his current popularity rating. Such numbers, of course, tell something but omit so much more that is essential. Now that many school officials have adopted effective schools research, concepts, and language they need to use many policy tools to improve school productivity, not just standardized test scores. Tightly-coupled organizational procedures sharply focused on academic goals, measured by test results, is clearly one of those tools. Too often, however, those who believe their only tool is a hammer begin to treat everything like a nail. For that to occur now would be, in my judgment, a mistake for the children of the nation.

NOTES

1

A sampling of articles that document popularity of effective schools' research would include: Bill Bennett and Terry Eastland, "Making a School System Work," Education Week, October 12, 1981, p. 24; Cynthia Wilson, "Do Seattle Schools Work?" The Weekly, January 26-February 1, 1983, pp. 26-29; Allan Odden and Van Dougherty, "State Programs of School Improvement: A 50-State Survey, (Denver,

Colorado: Education Commission of the States, 1982); Ronald Edmonds, "Programs of School Improvement: An Overview," Educational Leadership, December, 1982, pp. 4-11; "Rating Your Child's School," Consumers' Research Magazine, August, 1980,pp. 10-13; Thomas Toch, "Pittsburgh Votes New Priorities," Education Week, October 5, 1981, pp. 5.

2

The immediate background for the surge of interest in effective schools has been summarized by a number of researchers. See, for example, Stewart Purkey and Marshall Smith, "Effective Schools-A Review," Elementary School Journal, 83, No. 4 (1983), pp. 427-452.

3

A number of critiques from academicians have appeared within the last year. More appear to be coming. The most careful and comprehensive reviews that I have read thus far are Purkey and Smith, Brian Rowan, et. al., " Research on Effective Schools: A Cautionary Note," Educational Researcher, 12, No. 4, (April, 1983), pp. 24-31, and Michael Cohen, "Instructional Management and Social Conditions in Effective Schools," in Allan Odden and L. Dean Webb (eds.) School Finance and School Improvement: Linkages in the 1980s. (Washington, D.C.: American Educational Finance Association, 1983). An historical critique on the current enthusiasm for effective schools can be found in Michael Katz, "Reflections on Metaphors of Educational Reform," Harvard Graduate School of Education Bulletin, (Fall, 1980), pp. 4-9. The point in the text on the lack of attention to district leadership will disappear in time. Purkey and Smith use the concept of "nested layers" (i.e. the classroom is embedded in a school which is embedded in a district, each stratum influencing the other,etc.). Louis Smith and his colleagues have used it in an article describing the complex history of a school innovation. See Smith, et. al. "A Longitudinal Nested Systems Model of

Innovation and Change in Schooling," in Samuel Bacharach, (ed.) Organizational Behavior in Schools and School Districts(New York: Praeger, 1981). Also see Charles Bidwell and John Kasarda, "Conceptualizing and Measuring the Effects of School and Schooling," American Journal of Education,88, (1980), pp. 401-430. Finally, Phillip Hallinger acknowledged district leadership as an explanation for why principals engage in a surprisingly high level of instructional management. See Hallinger, "Assessing the Instructional Management Behavior of Principals," (Stanford: unpublished dissertation, 1983).

4

I draw from my experience in Arlington, Virginia (1974-1981), my observations of school districts in the San Francisco area that have adopted school effectiveness as a program, and from the following accounts: Alonzo Crim, "A Community of Believers," Daedalus (Fall, 1981), pp. 145-162; Robert benjamin, Making Schools Work, chapter 7 on Modesto, California (New York:Continuum,1981) and the articles on Portland, Maine in the Bennett and Eastland piece and Seattle, Washington. The summer, 1982 issue of "State Education Leader," published by the Education Commission of States, lists the steps that schools, districts, and state agencies should pursue (i.e. set goals, cultivate principal leadership, develop staff, coordinate curriculum,etc.).

5

"Improving Schools with Limited Resources,"Issuegram, (July, 1982), Education Commission of States; "Old Debate Revived Over Money v. School Quality," Education Week, March 30, 1983, p. 19; Daniel U. Levine and Eugene Eubanks explicitly argue that "schools with a solid base of funding, from regular taxes or Chapter I or any other source, do not necessarily require much additional funding for program expenditures...." See their article "A First Look at

Effective Schools Projects in New York City and Milwaukee," Kappan, 64, (June, 1983), p. 702.

6

Crim, pp. 145-162; Wilson, pp. 26-29. For costs of New York City's School Improvement Program, see Levine and Eubanks, p. 699.

7

See, for example, the description of New York City's School Improvement Project and the funding necessary to sustain central administration of the program, liasons for the schools, and other costs. Terry Clark and Dennis McCarthy, "School Improvement in New York City: The Evolution of a Project," Educational Researcher (April, 1983), pp. 17-24.

8

My colleague Ed Bridges has begun a long-term study of how school districts manage incompetent staff. His review of the literature turned up very little on either teachers or principals.

9

The literature on implementation grows yearly. Case studies and theoretical contributions have yielded modest outcomes in understanding the complicated process of converting policy decisions into practice. Richard Elmore's taxonomy of implementation models proves useful in differentiating the technical-rational approach of great current appeal to school policymakers from the bureaucratic, conflict-bargaining, and organizational development models. The federal and state experience with Title I, P.L. 94-142, and special projects since 1965 demonstrated how legislative intent persistently got twisted into shapes congenial to local needs. The tension between securing compliance and releasing local capacities runs like a red thread through the accounts of these efforts. The projects that were judged effective, according to the intensive

case studies of federal programs by Paul Berman and Milbrey McLaughlin were ones that somehow put their unique stamp upon the federal project's goals, activities, and outcomes. See Paul Berman and Milbrey McLaughlin, Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change, vol. viii: Implementing and Sustaining Innovations (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp., 1978). A critique of the literature on implementation of programs that ends with the notion that implementation is determined by so many factors and circumstances that it is idiosyncratic can be found in Paul Berman, "Educational Change: An Implementation Paradigm," in Rolf Lehming and Michael Kane (eds.) Improving Schools (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1981).

Mutual adaptation, the phrase extracted from the Rand researchers' work, has become a shorthand expression for implementation strategies that embrace grass-roots participation. While some efforts have employed the findings of implementation researchers who reported the pivotal importance of staff commitment and stake in decisionmaking to effective schools policies, the majority of programs implementing effective schools' research employ top-down strategies.

10

The New York School Improvement Project is one instance of a top-down strategy employing a school-based approach in a district concentrating on implementing school effectiveness research. For an analysis of bottom-up and school-based strategies, see Jane L. David, "School-Based Strategies: Implications for Government Policy," (Palo ALto, CA: Bay Area Research Group, 1982).

11

A number of findings on implementing change are captured in the recent work of Michael Fullan. See his "Implementing Educational Change: Progress at Last,"

(Conference Paper for National Institute of Education, February, 1982) and Fullan and Alan Pomfret, "Research on Curriculum and Instruction Implementation," Review of Educational Research, 47, (1977), pp. 335-397. Also David Crandall, et. al. "Models of School Improvement Process: Factors Contributing to Success," (Paper presented at AERA, MArch, 1982); Meredith Gall, "Using Staff Development to Improve Schools," R & D Perspectives (Winter, 1983), Center for Educational Policy and Management, University of Oregon.

12

Edmonds, pp. 4-11; personal acquaintance with effort in Milpitas, California. Levine and Eubanks recommend mandating school participation if sufficient funds are available. Trade-offs between choice and coercion go unmentioned in their Kappan article, p.702.

13

For teacher staff development and new work norms, see Judith Little, "School Success and Staff Development: The Role of Staff Development in Urban Desegregated Schools," (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1981); the rapidly growing body of literature on the principal will not be cited here. The work of Harry Wolcott, Donald Willower, Van Cleve Morris, to name just a few, using ethnographic and observational techniques (drawn from the work of Henry Mintzberg) portray the daily whirl that principals learn to manuever. Instructional leadership--however defined--is often missing from these portraits. See Harry Wolcott, The Man in the Principal's Office (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1973); Donald Willower, "Managerial Behavior of High School Principals," Educational Administration Quarterly, 17, (Winter, 1981),

pp. 69-80; Van Cleve Morris, et. al. The Urban Principal(Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1981).14

14See Mary Bentzen, et. al. Changing Schools: The Magic Feather Principle(New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974); for a number of productive discussions, see the various essays in Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller (eds.) Staff Development: New Demands, New Realities, New Perspectives (New York: Teachers College Press, 1979); Judith Little, "School Success and Staff Development: The Role of Staff Development in Urban Desegregated Schools.

15

Dennis McCarthy, et. al., "School Improvement Project, 1981-1982," (New York: New York Public Schools, Office of Educational Evaluation, 1982); My cost estimates and descriptions of the Arlington experience come from my files and a number of extended conversations with Betty Ann Armstrong, curriculum specialist in reading, language arts, and English for the Arlington County Public Schools during 1982-1983. David Crandall and Susan Loucks, "Preparing Facilitators for Implementation: Mirroring the School Improvement Process," (Paper presented at AERA, March, 1982); Jane L. David, "School-Based, School-Wide Reform Strategies: An Assessment of Their Impact and Promise, " (Palo Alto,CA: Bay Area Research Group, 1980).

16

A number of researchers have begun to investigate this critical area. Steven Bossert, David Dwyer, and Brian Rowan at the Far West Regional Lab have undertaken a series of studies based upon their model of instructional management. Thus far, the explication of the model and five ethnographic studies of principals in effect ive elementary schools have appeared. Phil Hallinger has completed a dissertation at Stanford University on varied principal behaviors in ten elementary schools in a California district that the literature on

effective schools stresses are essential for improved student performance.

17

See Ray Callahan, Education and the Cult of Efficiency(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962; Larry Cuban, School Chiefs Under Fire(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

18

A few studies of superintendent behavior that either deal directly or tangentially with leadership have begun to appear. See David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, Managers of Virtue (New York: Basic Books, 1982); Nancy Pitner and Rodney Ogawa, "Organizational Leadership: The Case of the School Superintendent," Educational Administration Quarterly, 17, (Spring, 1981), pp. 45-65; Lars Larson, et. al., "The Nature of a School Superintendent's Work,"(Washington: National Institute of Education, 1981).

19

Much of this comes from personal observation in school districts that have undertaken implementation of effective schools' research, the observations of Phil Hallinger who has worked with a number of school districts in northern California, and my experience in Arlington.

20

I served as a site visitor for the U.S. Department of Education's recognition program of exemplary high schools in May, 1983 and received the materials cited in the text. Whenever I speak to groups of administrators on effective schools' research, this issue invariably surfaces. The argument in the text should not be interpreted to say that none of the findings are relevant; only that the high school is structured quite differently than the elementary school and for findings drawn from the lower grades to possibly have an effect at the upper grades, organizational changes would need to occur. In the few high schools that I have observed firsthand that have been identified as effective, I did observe

organizational procedures and structural changes quite different from the typical high school.